The History of the Shora (Şore) People

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Abstract

This study examines the origins, migration, and settlement of the Shora (Şore) people, a Kurdish tribal community currently located in the Haji Omeran subdistrict of Choman, Erbil Province, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Based on oral tradition, regional tribal history, and archival records, the Shora people are traced to their roots in Şemzinan (Şemdinli, Hakkâri) and identified as a branch of the Herki (Herkî) tribal confederation, specifically the Salaranî Herki (Yaylapınar, Şemdinli).

Their migration to the slopes of Mount Halgurd between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflects broader patterns of Kurdish tribal displacement under Ottoman imperial policies. This account situates the Shora people within the geopolitical, tribal, and cultural transformations of the Kurdistan region from 1700 to the present.

1. Introduction

The Shora (Şore) village, located on the slopes of **Mount Halgurd**, stands as one of the coldest inhabited places in the Zagros Mountains. Despite its modest size, Shora encapsulates the story of **Kurdish tribal resilience, forced migration, and adaptation to harsh mountain environments**. The Shora people, known locally as **Şorayî**, preserve an oral memory that connects them to **Şemzinan (Şemdinli, Hakkâri Province, Turkey)**, from where their ancestors migrated in the late Ottoman period.

This document seeks to provide a **scholarly narrative** of the Shora people, combining **ethnographic detail, historical context, and tribal genealogy**.

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2. Historical Background: Şemzinan and the Herki Confederation

2.1. Şemzinan as Tribal Homeland

Şemzinan, located in the province of Hakkâri, was historically home to four principal tribes: **Herki (Herkî), Gerdî, Zerzan, and Humaru**. By the seventeenth century, Şemzinan had become the **epicenter of Herki tribal power**, serving as the launching point for seasonal migrations into **Bradost, Choman, and Urmia**.

2.2. The Herki Confederation

The **Herki** were one of the largest Kurdish tribal confederations of the Ottoman-Persian frontier. Known for their semi-nomadic lifestyle, they migrated between:

- **Summer:** Şemzinan mountains (Hakkâri).
- **Winter:** Bradost and Urmia plains.

The **Salaran Herki**, based in **Yaylapınar (Salaran)**, were particularly associated with southward migrations into **Choman and Bradost** during the eighteenth century.

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3. The Migration of the Shora People (1700–1800)

3.1. Ottoman Pressure and Displacement

From 1700 to 1800, Kurdish tribes in Hakkâri experienced intense Ottoman pressure, including:

- **Taxation and conscription**, which disrupted traditional pastoral economies.
- **Military campaigns** targeting semi-independent Kurdish tribes resisting imperial authority.

- **Border militarization**, as the Ottoman and Persian empires clashed repeatedly in Kurdistan.

The Shora ancestors, part of the **Salaran Herki**, were unable to sustain life under these pressures and migrated southward into the **Halgurd mountains of Choman**.

3.2. Settlement in Halgurd

- The Shorayî founded their village on the **slopes of Mount Halgurd**, in what became known as **Shora (Şore)**.

- Oral memory situates their first arrival as a **small group of seven or eight households**, marking a modest but permanent foothold.

- Relatives split across the region:

    - Some remained in **Bradost**.

    - Others migrated further east toward **Urmia (Iran)**.

    - The Shorayî stayed in **Balakayety (Choman)**, establishing Shora as their center.

4. Cultural and Tribal Identity

4.1. Herki Lineage

The Shora people identify as part of the **Herki confederation**, and specifically the **Salaranî branch**. This identity links them directly to **Yaylapınar (Salaran village, Şemzinan)**, the homeland of their ancestors. Even today, families from Shora often refer to themselves as **Şemzinî**, preserving the memory of their origin.

4.2. Language and Dialect

- Historically, the Shorayî spoke **Badinî (Kurmanji)**, as in Şemzinan.
- In Choman, contact with the **Soran Emirate** introduced **Sormanji influences**, creating a blended dialect.

4.3. Economy and Livelihood

- **Pastoralism:** sheep and cattle herding was the primary occupation.
- **Agriculture:** small-scale mountain farming.
- **Trade:** limited; the Shorayî remained largely self-sufficient and tied to the land.

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5. Twentieth-Century Transformations

5.1. The Ba'athist Period

During the **Ba'athist regime (1960s–1980s)**, the strategic Halgurd border zone became militarized. The Shora village, like many others, was **burned and depopulated** as part of state policies of depopulation and control.

5.2. Displacement and Diaspora

- Many Shorayî resettled in **Choman town**, while others migrated to **Erbil**.
- Despite displacement, seasonal return to Shora continues, especially from **spring to autumn**.
- Today, the Shorayî live between **Shora, Choman, and Erbil**, but remain united in kinship and land ownership of the Shora area.

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6. Memory, Identity, and Place

The landscape of Shora is marked by a rich cultural memory, where every spring, field, mountain, and stone has been named and remembered for generations. These names act as **oral archives**, preserving the history of settlement, livelihood, and belonging.

Springs (Kaniya)

- Kaniya Şêx Teha
- Kaniya Sincanê
- Kaniya Mişkê
- Kaniya Sarkê
- Kaniya Drîlan
- Kaniya Chisalân
- Kaniya Mêrgê Spindarê
- Kaniya Jinan (Spring of Women)
- Kaniya Nawsalotiyan
- Kaniya Shinkan
- Kaniya Sayê

Lands and Fields (Zewî & Taxtayî)

- Shandash (Great & Small)
- Spindar
- Bîş
- Serlêr
- Derash
- Kandebawe
- Gund
- Sêlan
- Shiwe Rezi Melayan
- Zewî Drezh (Long Field)
- Zewî Rê (Road Field)
- Nawsalotiyan
- Rêyê Gul
- Saye

- Goran
- Zewî Jon
- Kolk
- Koraf
- Zewî Mashan
- Zewî Beborjan
- Sarbinok

Hills (Gird)

- Sergird (Top Hill)
- Girdê Xrila
- Girdê Sakota
- Girdê Spindar

Rocks (Berd)

- Berdaqûç (Ram Rock)
- Berdê Mam Zeyn (Rock of Mam Zeyn)
- Berdê Kelashka
- Berdê Bzanan (Women's Rock)

High Places & Ridges

- Kalider
- Taqî Shiwe Kendwan
- Hawêzê Kawran
- Solinê Berdaqûçî
- Bin Berî Kêlî
- Khrôm
- Sêwok
- Basta Chawrga

Cemeteries (Qebristan)

- Qebrî Chaki Şore
- Qebristanê Zînî Şore
- Qebristanê Qamtarê
- Qebristanê Derashî

Caves (Kende)

- Kende Pîrê Khajanê
- Kandebawe
- Kende Shiwe Reşê
- Kende Alakanê
- Dolê Mêrgan
- Kende Shiwane

Trees (Dar & Gato)

- Gato Gorrkhilanê
- Gato Shandashê (Tree of Ahmed Azo)
- Tuwe Rejebi
- Tuwina Chaki
- Gato Kandebawe
- Tuwe Wardila
- Jwize Shnoyî (Shno Walnut)
- Jwize Pelk Piwaz (Onion Walnut Grove)

These names preserve history and affirm the Shorayî's enduring attachment to their homeland.

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7. Conclusion

The history of the **Shora (Şore) people** reflects the broader Kurdish experience of **migration, resilience, and adaptation**.

- Their migration from **Şemzinan (Hakkâri)** to **Mount Halgurd (Choman)** in the **eighteenth century** was part of the larger **Herki movement across the Ottoman-Persian frontier**.

- As descendants of the **Salaran Herki**, the Shorayî preserved both their tribal identity and their geographic memory of Şemzinan.

- Though displacement and war marked their modern history, the Shora people remain a symbol of **continuity and rootedness in the mountains of Kurdistan**.

Bibliographic Sources for the History of Shora (Şore)

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1. Oral Traditions of the Shorayî People

- Oral genealogies of Shora families (Şemzinî).
- Community memory of migration from Şemzinan to Halgurd (18th century).
- Place-names in Shora (kaniyên, qebristanên, berdên, zewiyên).

2. Historical Records of Şemzinan Tribes (Herki, Salaranî)

- Ottoman tax registers (defter), 17th–18th centuries.
- Records of Salaran (Yaylapınar) as a Herki sub-branch village.
- Kurdish chronicles describing Herki migrations to Bradost, Urmia, Halgurd.

3. Ottoman and British Reports on Kurdish Tribes (18th–19th centuries)

- Ottoman provincial registers on nomadic taxation in Şemzinan.
- Claudius James Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan* (1820).
- Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (1853).
- Mark Sykes, *Dar-ul-Islam: A Record of a Journey through Ten of the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey* (1904).
- British consular archives on Kurdish tribes in Hakkâri (19th century).

4. Regional Ethnographic Studies

- Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (1989).
- Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement* (PhD Thesis, 1960; published posthumously 2006).
- Vladimir Minorsky, *The Kurds: Notes and Materials* (1915).

- Basile Nikitine, *Les Kurdes: Étude Sociologique et Historique* (1956).
- Kurdish-language historical works on Choman and Halgurd (Erbil, Duhok, 20th century).
- Oral ethnographic fieldwork in Choman (late 20th century).

5. Additional Sources for Context

- Martin van Bruinessen, *Kurdish Tribes and Tribalism in the 19th and 20th Century* (articles, 1990s).
- Richard Tapper, *Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (1983) — comparative model for nomadic tribes.
- Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State* (2004).
- Hakkâri regional surveys published in Ottoman *Salname* (*yearbooks*) of the 19th century.
- Archives of the Ottoman Imperial Council (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi) on Şemzinan tribes.
- Local Kurdish historians: works by **Celadet Ali Bedirxan**, **Muhammad Amin Zeki Beg** (*Kurd and Kurdistan*, 1931).
- Recent field research by Kurdish scholars in Erbil (Choman heritage projects, 2000s–2020s).